



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 13, 2007

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Virginia Beach Woman Pleads Guilty to Murder

(Norfolk, Virginia) - Tanya Y. Torrence, age 35, of Virginia Beach, pled guilty today before United States District Judge Raymond A. Jackson, to the kidnapping and murder of her estranged boyfriend's mother. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the guilty plea. Torrence faces a maximum sentence of life in prison when she is sentenced on July 12, 2007.

According to court documents, Torrence was romantically involved with the victim's son, Ronnie Knight. After Ronnie Knight broke-off the relationship, Torrence was evicted from her apartment, and invited by the victim, Mary Knight, to stay with her until she found a permanent residence. The day that she was evicted, Torrence purchased a .22 caliber pistol. On the evening of July 1, 2006, Torrence persuaded Mary Knight to leave Knight's residence with her to retrieve a scooter. Rather than retrieve the scooter, Torrence kidnapped Mary Knight. The next day Knight's family members contacted Virginia Beach investigators and informed them that Mary Knight, age 72, would never have voluntarily been away overnight without notifying her family.

Investigators with the Virginia Beach Police Department began tracking the cellular telephone being used by Torrence. On July 3, investigators determined that Torrence had left Virginia, traveled through Maryland, and was in the area of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Later that day, Torrence called Ronnie Knight and told him that she had shot his mother and that she was going to turn herself into police. A few minutes later, Torrence entered the 17th District Police Station, in Philadelphia, and self-surrendered, telling officers that she was the person they were looking for, and the body was outside in the van. Mary Knight's white Dodge van was parked in front of the police station. Officers used the keys provided by Torrence to open the van and found Mary Knight dead inside. The medical examiner determined that Mary Knight had died from two gunshot wounds to her chest. Torrence admitted to homicide investigators that she had shot and killed Mary Knight.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, together with the Virginia Beach Police Department and the Philadelphia Police Department, conducted the investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laura P. Tayman.

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